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ABSTRACT

This essay reviews the functions of the Tanzanian National Central Library (NCL) and evaluates the activities performed and services provided by the NCL in light of the definitions of national library functions established by UNESCO and by K. W. Humphreys, Librarian of the University of Birmingham. The relationship between the NCL and the Tanzanian Library Service is outlined and the national library movement in the developing countries of Africa is described. A list of the administrative and accounting, technical and reader, consultancy and advisory, and book production services performed by the NCL is incorporated in the text. Two charts, the first comparing the UNESCO definition of a national library with the functions of the NCL, and the second comparing Humphreys' list of national library functions with the functions of the NCL, are also included. A checklist of national library functions and a 20-item reference list accompany the essay. (JL)

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IS THE NCL A NATIONAL LIBRARY?

by

C.S. Ilomo

Tanzania Library Service
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IS THE NCL A NATIONAL LIBRARY?

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C. S. ILOMO

Leading Role of TLS

Tanzania Library Service (TLS) was formally established in 1964 by the Tanganyika Library Services Board Act 1963. The Act empowered the Board to "promote, establish, equip, manage, maintain and develop libraries in Tanganyika."[1] The word "libraries" was interpreted to mean all types of libraries.

In 1975, the 1963 Library Act was repealed. TLS was by law entrusted, among other things, with the following responsibilities.[2]

(i) "To provide facilities for the study of and for training in, the principles, procedures and techniques of Librarianship and such other related subjects as the Board may from time to time decide".

(ii) "To conduct examinations and to grant diplomas, certificates or other awards of the Board".

(iii) "To plan and coordinate library and documentation services in the United Republic."

(iv) "To advise the government and parastatal institutions on all matters relating to the production of books and other literary works".

(v) "To advise the Government and parastatal institutions on all matters relating to library and documentation services."

(vi) To maintain a register of professional librarians in the country.

The leading role of TLS does not specifically refer to the NCL. We can only say it is playing a leading role because it is also the HQ of TLS. In other words, it is playing a central role because it is part of a larger system. The phrase 'Central role' may be construed to mean the provision of centralized services which affect the operations of all service points in the system. But it is not necessarily synonymous with national role. Therefore the NCL cannot be regarded as a National Library although in the absence of a NL proper it performs certain functions of a NL.

If the NCL were to play a leading role in the nation's library infrastructure as well as perform the proper functions of a National Library independently, then it would have to be a NL. Normally, a NL is established by an Act of Parliament. But the establishment of the NCL was a matter of administrative expediency on the part of the Board.

The National Central Library (NCL)

According to Mr. Broome, the first Director of TLS, the NCL was established to:[3]

(a) House a public library for Dar es Salaam.
(b) Act as the administrative HQs for a nationwide public and school library service.
(c) Act as a National Library for Tanzania.

Of the three functions, only (c) refers to NCL as a National Library. It would appear that he derived this function from the Libraries (Deposit of Books) order 1963 which required printers to deposit one perfect copy of all publications printed in Tanzania with the Director of Library Services. This meant that in the absence of a NL, the NCL could act as the guardian of the nation's literary heritage.

In the 1963 library Act, there is no mention of any type of library. There is also no provision that TLS should build a NCL which should act as a NL. TLS leading role in the nation's library infrastructure is also implied.

Originally, the NCL was conceived as a Municipal Library for the then Dar es Salaam Municipality. In July 1960, it was decided that "the construction of an expensive library for Dar es Salaam unrelated to a general territorial plan for library development would almost certainly predestine it to failure."[4] Therefore it was decided to incorporate the NCL into the overall national plan. The NCL was mainly built to facilitate the carrying out of centralized services for TLS network. Even at its opening in December 1967, President Nyerere referred to it as the "hub of the wheel"[5] for spreading library services to urban and rural areas throughout mainland Tanzania. Likewise, the 1975 Act which was enacted 7 years after opening the NCL does not refer to it as the NL for Tanzania. It does however stress the leading role of TLS. It would seem that the Government feared that if the NCL were designated as a NL for Tanzania, TLS would probably be unable to perform adequately the proper functions of a NL and those of a public

library network. In the 1970s, the government decided to establish a NL in Dodoma.[6] This move, no doubt, confirmed the government's fears. It is however difficult to say exactly what would happen if the government had not decided to move to Dodoma. It would also seem that the idea was born after the new capital city planners had visited several capital cities in the world. Indeed national libraries are prestige institutions. They epitomize the cultures and intellectualism of the countries which have them. As a progressive country, Tanzania would not wish to lag behind in this respect. In mooting the idea of a NL, librarians were not consulted. It was an independent decision of the government and a very good one too. On the other hand, it could be argued that if the government had not decided to move to Dodoma, the idea of establishing a NL would not have been born. There is, in fact, no reference to the need for a NL in all Development Plans. Even librarians never suggested to the government the need for a NL. Suffice it to say that the decision to establish a NL was as much a political decision as was the move to found a capital city in central Tanzania.

In the 1980s therefore, Tanzania is all set to build a NL. Its planning has been entrusted to TLS in keeping with its leading library role. It is assumed that when it is built, it will remain part of TLS but performing the proper functions of a National Library. Therefore the government will have to amend the Tanzania Library Services Board Act 1975 in order to accommodate the NL. It will also be necessary to increase Treasury subventions substantially.

On the other hand, the government could after the library is built, decide to make it an independent institution as in other countries. In that case a National Library Act will be necessary. It is a good thing to have a NL as a separate institution because it can get its own subvention from the Treasury. This has the advantage of boosting the overall amount of money available for library services. But, in the interest of coordination of library resources the Board must guard against any proposition to make the proposed NL independent of TLS. For one thing a library collection of Tanzania materials is being built at the NCL. It is hoped that this collection will form the nucleus of the proposed NL.

National Libraries Movement.

The pattern of library development in many developing countries of Africa has tended to do away with National Libraries which are fashionable in the West. This is the style which early planners of library systems adopted in Africa. In most countries they decided that it would be uneconomic

to establish national libraries as well as national central libraries. They chose to found national central libraries which could play a dual role:

(i) Act as HQs of National Library Services

(ii) Act as National Libraries.

However, in recent years some countries began to question the logic behind such a trend because national central libraries have tended to emphasize the library services to the masses at the expense of proper national library functions. This does not however mean that National Central Libraries have abrogated their leadership in their countries' library infrastructures. It has been necessary for them to concentrate on building their library collections and extending library services to rural areas because rural development in most developing countries is a priority. If national central libraries neglected this, it would be a great disservice to the countries concerned. Yet by paying lip-service to proper national library functions, scholarly and research communities have suffered to a certain extend.

Although some countries of Africa have had national libraries for a number of decades, the national library concept became particularly attractive from the 1960s. For example in mid 1960s, Ghana[7], a small rich country but facing economic difficulties decided to set up a national library but these proposals have since remained paper plans. Nigeria passed its National Library Act in 1964. In the 1970s, Tanzania also decided to establish a NL in Dodoma, a man centred capital city, in addition to the NCL. If the NCL were to be designated as a NL for Tanzania, the government would have to do a number of things:

(i) Afford it legal recognition by incorporating a clause in the Tanzania Library Services Board Act 1975. The National Assembly (Parliament) would however have to seek the approval of the people before committing itself to such a resolution. With the new status the NCL would have to be called, National Central Library: National Library of Tanzania.

(ii) If legal recognition of the NCL as a National Library were to be fruitful, the government would have to go far beyond a mere parliamentary resolution. The NCL would need greater fiscal support if it were to sustain and expand its role as a NL.

(iii) The government would have to ensure continuous expansion of the NCL which would now shoulder proper national library functions in addition to the central role it plays within the TLS network.

A library is like a living organism. Therefore a static national library ceases to be a library. "A NL must continuously expand its collections, its services, its space and its support. It must also expand its tools - the staff who are to do intellectual work"[8] and the machines which are to perform routine operations.

Present Functions of NCL

The NCL performs many functions including centralized services. These are:

Administrative and Accounting Services:

(i) Planning, development and administration of nationwide public library service including manpower planning, recruitment, placement, training and development.

(ii) Accounting, budgetting and financial control.

(iii) Printing and purchasing of stationery for all service points.

(iv) Purchasing of furniture and equipment.

Technical Services and Services to Readers:

(i) Centralized book purchasing.

(ii) Centralized subscription to periodicals.

(iii) Centralized classification, cataloguing and processing of books and non-book materials.

(iv) Binding of Swahili books, paper backs, back issues of periodicals, magazines and newspapers etc.

(v) Exchange of publications with other libraries at home and overseas.

(vi) Provision of documentation services.

(vii) The Acquisitions and Cataloguing Department at HQs is responsible for running a Book Box Exchange Service. Collections of books are loaned free of charge to a variety of centres all over Tanzania including Ujamaa Villages, prisons, community centres etc.

(viii) The Lending Department at HQ operates a nationwide postal library service. It is a free service designed to satisfy the reading needs of people who live in areas without library facilities.

Bibliographic Services:

(i) Production of in-house publications including accession lists, reading lists, book selection lists and bibliographies including the Tanzania National Bibliography.

(ii) Production of Abstracting and Indexing Bulletins prepared by the Documentation Unit.

Consultancy and Advisory Services:

(i) Studying the library needs of individual organizations and preparing reports for implementation.
(ii) Advising Ministries and parastatals on training their library staff, design of library buildings, collections building etc.

Book Production:

(i) Encouraging established and budding authors to write books relevant to Tanzania.
(ii) Collecting information on authors and publishing an authors' directory or guide.
(iii) Publishing books and library publications.

Definition and Functions of a National Library

'Unesco has defined national libraries as "libraries which irrespective of their title, are responsible for acquiring and conserving copies of significant publications published in the country and functioning as a legal "deposit" library, either by law or under other arrangements. They will also normally perform some of the following functions: produce a national bibliography, hold or keep up to date a large and representative collection of foreign literature including books about the country; act as a national bibliographical information centre; compile union catalogues; and publish the retrospective national bibliography. Libraries which may be called "national" but whose functions do not correspond to the above definition should not be placed in the 'national libraries' category:"[9]

Unesco Definition[10] VS. NCL Functions

	Unesco Definition	NCL Functions
1	A national library acquires and conserves copies of all significant publications published in the country and functions as a "legal deposit" library either by law or under other arrangements	NCL acquires all publications produced in Tanzania. It is a legal depository library and is entitled to 2 copies of each publication.
2	A national library produces a current national bibliography	NCL also produces a current national bibliography.
3	A national library holds and keeps up to date a large and representative collection of foreign literature including books about the country	NCL does not provide a full coverage of foreign literature
4	A national library acts as a national bibliographical centre	NCL produces a Tanzania Union List of Periodicals. NCL produces abstracting and indexing bulletins. NCL acts as an information and referral centre (TANDOC).
5.	A national library produces a union catalogue of library resources in the country	NCL does not produce a union catalogue of library resources in Tanzanian libraries
6.	A national library compiles a retrospective bibliography of the country's literary heritage	NCL does not compile a restrospective bibliography of the country's literary heritage.

Humphreys on National Library Functions

In 1966, K.W. Humphreys, Librarian of the University of Birmingham listed national library functions as follows:[11]

1. Fundamental functions of a national library
   - Provides the outstanding general collection of the nation's literature broadly defined to include books, manuscripts, memorabilia, maps, music scores, periodicals, films, etc.
   - Serves as the central depot legal of the nation to ensure systematic collections of all published material in that nation
   - Provides as full coverage of foreign literature as possible through some systematic method of acquisition
   - Publishes a current national bibliography and a union list of periodical holdings
   - Serves as a national bibliographical information center
   - Publishes catalogues of the contents of the library
   - Exhibits its collections for the information and benefit of the people as a whole
2. Desirable functions of a national library
   - Maintains a system of interlibrary loans
   - Maintains a manuscript section
   - Conducts research into library techniques
3. Functions of national library service not essentially functions of the national library
   - Conducts an international book exchange service
   - Provides special library services for the blind
   - Offers opportunities for training in library service
   - Provides assistance to other libraries in services and techniques
4. Leadership role in the nation's library infrastructure.

   "The national library should be the prime mover in library matters and should be expected to be the leading library in all fields."

"The national librarian, too should play a central role in all systematic planning of a country's library services .... [and should] see the country's library system as a whole and the relationship of

the national library to it, thus ensuring that the various strands in the organization continue to form a golden chain of responsibility for service, from the smallest to the largest library and from the richest to the poorest."

Humphreys' NL Functions VS. NCL Functions

Humphreys' Standard Functions			NCL Functions
No.	Class	Functions	
1	Fundamental functions of a national library.	(a) Provides the outstanding general collection of the nation's literature, broadly defined to include books, MSS. Memorabia, maps, music scoves, periodicals, films etc.	It is by law supposed to collect comprehensively and exhaustively all print and non-print materials except films.
		(b) Serves as the central depot legal of the nation to ensure systematic collection of all published material in that nation.	It is a legal deposit library of all publications printed or produced in Tanzania for distribution or sale.
		(c) Provides as full coverage of foreign literature as possible through some systematic method of acquisition.	Provides foreign literature very sparingly.
		(d) Publishes a current national bibliography and a union list of periodical holdings	Publishes both a current national bibliography and a Tanzania Union list of periodical holdings.
		(e) Services as a bibliographical information centre	(i) Provides reference, lending and referral services

	Humphreys'	Functions	NCL Functions
No.	CLASS	Functions	
			(ii) Produces abstracting and indexing bulletins (iii) Acts as a reference library of last resort for Tanzania materials. (iv) Provides photocopying services.
		(f) Publishes catalogues of the contents of the library	Nil
		(g) Exhibits its collections for the information and benefit of the people as a whole	Exhibits its collections for public information
2.	Desirable functions of a national library	(a) Maintains a system of inter-library loans	Maintains a system of inter-library loans for its service points. Cooperation with other types of libraries is informal.
		(b) Maintains a manuscript section	Nil
		(c) Conducts research into library techniques	Nil

	Humphreys' Functions		NCL Functions
No.	Class	Functions	
3.	Functions of a national library service not essentially functions of a national library	(a) conducts an international book exchange service	Runs a publications exchange programme with other libraries in the world.
		(b) Provides special library services to the blind	Runs a film show programme in Dar es Salaam for disadvantaged children
		(c) Offers opportunities for training in library service	(i) Conducts in-service training for library staff working in various types of libraries
			(ii) Conducts a National Library Assistants' Certificate Course.
			(iii) Conducts crush training programmes for Library Assistants
			(iv) Administers a Government Higher Standard Examination for Civil Service library Cadres
		(d) Provides assistance to other libraries in services and techniques	(i) Provides consultancy and advisory services to other types of libraries.
			(ii) Advises other libraries on buildings, staffing, collections building, salaries, library procedures etc.

			(iii) Seconds its staff to other libraries on contractual short and long term basis
4.	Leadership role in the nation's library infrastructure	(a) National library is the prime mover in library matters and plays a leading library role in all fields.	(i) Has established and operates a Tanzania National Documentation Centre which will be the prime mover of specialized documentation units in other organizations. (ii) Advises the government on library and information policy, library standards and legislation; training and education for librarianship (iii) It is a dopository library for a number of international organizations publications. (iv) It is planning and is going to administer a N.L when it is built. (v) Publishes books which are pumped into the nations libraries.
		(b) The national librarian plays a central role in all systematic planning of the country's library services	Legally the Director of Library Services is the prime mover of systematic planning of the country's library services but so far it is confined to the public library system.

Is the NCL a National Library?

From the above discussion and comparative analysis of the functions of national libraries and the Tanzania National Central Library, one is led to conclude that the latter is not a NL in the strict sense of the word and as defined by eminent librarians. It was above all not meant to be a NL anyway:

(i) The NCL was established to act as a HQ of a National Public Library Service (TLS). Its conception and construction was an act of administrative expediency.

(ii) The NCL is a legal depository library for all publications and non-print materials except films.[12] The library shares this role with three other libraries. They include the University of Dar es Salaam Library, the CCM Ideological College Library, Kivukoni and the Film Library of the Audio Visual Institute which is the only one legally designated as a national library as far as films are concerned.[13] Therefore the NCL can never claim to be the only institution to have all the intellectual works produced in Tanzania.

(iii) The NCL is not legally recognized as a NL. Traditionally national libraries are established by separate legislation.

(iv) The NCL does not perform many of the functions of a NL. Those that it performs have so far not been carried out adequately because of:

(a) The limitations in its own operations which hold it back from performing functions of a NL properly.

(b) The library's severely cramped space. Even if the NCL had a second floor it couldn't possibly shoulder all NL functions. That is more space would still be needed.

(c) Shortage of funds for erecting new buildings; purchase of books, furniture, equipment and other vital resources.

(d) General shortage of professional librarians with the requisite skills. Although the NCL has sent its staff for professional training each year, it has not done all it could toward alleviating that thortage.[14]

(v) The NCL has tended to concentrate on extending library services to rural areas therefore limiting the resources available for performing proper national library functions.[15]

Checklist of National Libraries Functions.[16,17,18,19]

Acts as a centre for the national contribution to Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC).

Acts as a centre for photocopying services.

Acts as a cultural centre by providing facilities for conferences, meetings, seminars, concerts and plays, exhibits, literary programmes including writing workshops, educational and cultural shows etc. etc.

Acts as a centre for training scholars in the techniques of administering research collections.

Acts as a centre for Science and Technological information.[20]

Acts as a focal point for international library and information programmes e.g. UNISIST.

Acts as a national centre for foreign lending and borrowing and provides the necessary national central lending services.

Acts as a prime mover in all library matters and is expected to play a leading library role in all fields.

Acts as a research centre for library and information sciences and encourages the progressive use of equipment to facilitate efficient organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information, from simple to the more sophisticated equipment as funds and the technological level of the country permit.

Benefits the country from intergovernmental exchange, copyright and legal deposits.

Carries out all functions normally provided by national libraries of the highest standing.

Conducts an international book exchange service.

Compiles a retrospective bibliography of the country's literary heritage.

Coordinates national efforts of translating foreign documents including technical publications and bibliographical tools into local languages.

Devises and keeps up to date classification and subject heading systems that serve as national standards.

Engages in national and international cooperative programmes which promote librarianship e.g. research into classification, cataloguing, indexing and abstracting services etc.

Exhibits its collections for the information and benefit of the people as a whole.

Gives reference services, in-house and by mail, and acts as a National Information Referral Centre.

Investigates into methods of preserving library materials including the attacking of problems of deteliorating paper faced by all libraries in the country.

Its national librarian plays a central role in all systematic planning of a country's library services.

Maintains a Copyright office and administers all copyright services including registration of copyrights.

Maintains a manuscript section.

Maintains a system of interlibrary loans.

Offers opportunities for training in library service including binding, printing, repair of library materials and their preservation, as well as the operation and repair of audio visual equipment.

Protects and conserves documents by providing special storage facilities for rare works, special reading rooms for consultation and constantly inspects and treats defective documents.

Provides as full coverage of foreign literature as possible through some systematic method of acquisition.

Provides assistance to other libraries in services and techniques.

Provides a catalogue card distribution service to various types of libraries.

Provides the outstanding general collection of the nation's literature, broadly defined to include books, manuscripts, memorabia, maps, music scores, periodicals, films etc.

Provides special library services for the handicapped people e.g. the blind.

Publishes catalogues of the contents of the library.

Publishes a current national bibliography and a union list of periodical holdings.

Receives gifts to the nation of rare books, papers, money etc.

Runs an active bibliographic publishing programme e.g. produces guides, subject directories, area bibliographies, material relating to children's literature etc. to facilitate the exploitation of the library's collections by students, scholars, research workers and the public at large.

Secures representation of a country in international library organizations, conferences, conventions etc.

Serves as the central dépôt legal of the nation to ensure systematic collection of all published material in that nation.

Serves as a national bibliographic information centre.

Serves as the national centre for cataloguing.

FOOTNOTES

1. An Act to establish the Tanganyika Library Services Board and to provide for matters incidental thereto and connected therewith. 11th July, 1963.

2. An Act to provide for the continuance of Tanganyika Library Services Board under the name of Tanzania Library Services Board, to enlarge the functions of the Board and to make provision for the management and control of the Board. Cap.532 1975.

3. Broome, E.M. First steps in Tanganyika. A paper delivered at the E.A. Library Association Conference. Nairobi, Dec. 16th 1965. p.9.

4. Tanganyika Government. Ministry of Education and Labour. Minutes of the Meeting of the central Library Committee held on 1st July 1960.

5. Nyerere, J.K. Speech at the official opening of the National Central Library, Dar es Salaam, Dec. 9, 1967.

6. National Capital Master Plan, Dodoma, Tanzania. Prepared for the Capital Development Authority, Dodoma by Project Planning Associates Ltd., Toronto, Canada, May 1976 pp. 70 - 71.

7. Ghana Library Board, Annual Report 1967/68 p. 3. Also Kaungamno, F.E. and Ilomo, C.S. Books Build Nations: Vol. I. Library Services in West and E. Africa with a foreword by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. London: Transafrica, 1979. p. 41.

8. Knight D.M. and Nourse, E.S. Libraries at large, edited by D.M. Knight and E.S. Nourse. New York and London: R.R. Bowker Co. 1969. p.446.

9. Unesco. Recommendation concerning the international standardization of library statistics adopted by the General Conference at its sixteenth session, Paris, 13th November 1970. p.8.

10. Ibid.

11. Functions of national libraries are succinctly described by K.W. Humphreys in Unesco Bulletin for Libraries., Vol. 20, No.4 July-August 1966 pp 158-69.

12. An Act to amend certain written laws. 18th Feb. 1977. In Acts Supplement to the Gazette of the United Republic of Tanzania No.7. Vol. /VII/ of 18th Feb. 1977. The Tanzania Library Services Board Act 1975 was amended to exclude films from being deposited with the legal deposit section of NCL.

13. According to the Audio Visual Institute of Dar es Salaam Act 1974, the institute's library is designated as a National Film Library.

14. The TLS Board advised the Government to establish a national library school as far back as 1978.

15. If TLS gave equal emphasis to proper national library functions and the extension of public library services, it would probably lose financial support. Libraries are regarded as an essential input in promoting rural library development.

16. Knight D.M op. cit. pp.349-350 and pp. 447-463.

17. Unesco. Recommendations concerning the international standardization of library statistics op. cit.

18. Tanzania Library Services Board. Memorandum on the development of library services in Dodoma National Capital City and Its Impact Regions pp.4-6.

19. "The Role of National Libraries in National and International Information Systems". A policy Statement Approved by Directors of National Libraries Meeting in Lausanne 20 - 21 August 1976.

20. A national library would appear to be most appropriate institution to act as a centre for Science and technology. Normally, it will have all the science and technical documents acquire through legal deposit law, will have great ability to acquire or purchase vast science and technical publications from various countries, because of the nature of its functions, it will have vast experience in providing bibliographical services to other government and quasi - governmental agencies, and some national libraries do have Science and Technology Divisions e.g. LC and the British Library (NLL for Science and Technology, Boston Spa). Therefore a national library is the logical choice for performing the functions of a national information and referral centre for science and technology.